

102

VERTIGO presents

# FABLES



WHEN THINGS  
ARE DARKEST  
WE NEED A  
**SUPER TEAM!**  
PART 1 OF 5



Apr '11  
suggested for  
mature readers  
[vertigo.com](http://vertigo.com)

Willingham · Buckingham · Leialoha

SIX MONTHS LATER...

...NEAR ARCADIA TOWNSHIP, NEBRASKA.

HUH?

FLY?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WAY OUT HERE IN THE ASS-END OF THE GREAT NOWHERE?

I CAME TO FETCH YOU, BIGBY.

KING COLE SAYS TO DROP THE CURRENT MISSION. IT'S **DONE**. YOU'RE NEEDED BACK IN HAVEN, RIGHT AWAY.

# THE NEXT BIG PLAN

## CHAPTER ONE OF *SUPER TEAM*

BILL WILLINGHAM MARK BUCKINGHAM STEVE LEIALOHA  
*writer - creator* *penciller* *inker*

LEE LOUGHRIDGE: *colors* TODD KLEIN: *letters* JOAO RUAS: *cover*  
GREGORY LOCKARD: *assistant editor* SHELLY BOND: *editor*



THINGS ARE MOVING FAST.

BASICALLY, GRINDER, YOU'D BE THE RAW MUSCLE ON THE TEAM.

PINOCCHIO INFORMS ME THIS IS AN IMPORTANT ARCHETYPAL ROLE IN ANY SMALL TACTICAL UNIT, SUCH AS WE HAVE IN MIND.

IN FACT, YOU'LL BE THE ANCHOR AROUND WHICH THE REST OF US WILL FILL THE OTHER TRADITIONAL POSITIONS.

BUT ALL OF THAT IS MOOT, OF COURSE, DEPENDING ON THIS DETAILED EXAMINATION OF YOUR FEARS AND ANXIETIES.

THE DARK MAN FEEDS ON OUR FEARS. WE DON'T WANT TO RISK EMPOWERING HIM AT THE SAME TIME WE'RE TRYING TO DEGRADE HIS CAPABILITIES.



SO, IF YOU'RE READY I'LL BEGIN THE TEST.

THERE'LL BE SOME PROFOUND DISCOMFORT, BUT I ASSURE YOU THAT YOU'LL BE IN NO ACTUAL DANGER AT ANY TIME.



OH, BIGBY, YOU'RE HERE.

GOOD.

WE NEED TO GET STARTED RIGHT AWAY, SO SETTLE IN QUICK, SEE WHOEVER YOU NEED TO SEE, AND REPORT BACK TO ME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

GOOD AFTERNOON, HIGHNESS.



DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE SUITS--OR THE UNIFORMS--OR WHATEVER HE'S CALLING THEM TODAY.

I NEED TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER BUT I'M BEGINNING TO DOUBT THEY'RE AS VITAL AS PINOCCHIO CLAIMS. TRUST ME--WE MAY NOT NEED THEM.



WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

LONG STORY. I'LL FILL YOU IN AS WE GO.

OKAY, BACK TO BUSINESS, THEN. MAYBE YOU SHOULD LIE DOWN, SO ANY THRASHING YOU DO WON'T BE A DANGER TO ME.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH WHILE I COUNT DOWN FROM TEN...





WE'VE GOT A BIT OF A WALK AHEAD OF US, BIGBY. WHAT YOU NEED TO SEE FIRST'S ON THE BORDER, AND HAVEN'S GROWN PRETTY BIG.

IT'S BECOME QUITE A HIKE FROM THE CENTER TO THE OUTSKIRTS.



I WONDER IF I SHOULD CREATE SOME SORT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM?

HEY!



OH NO. WAIT UP!

I WAS HOPING WE'D BE ABLE TO SLIP BY WITHOUT HIM NOTICING US.

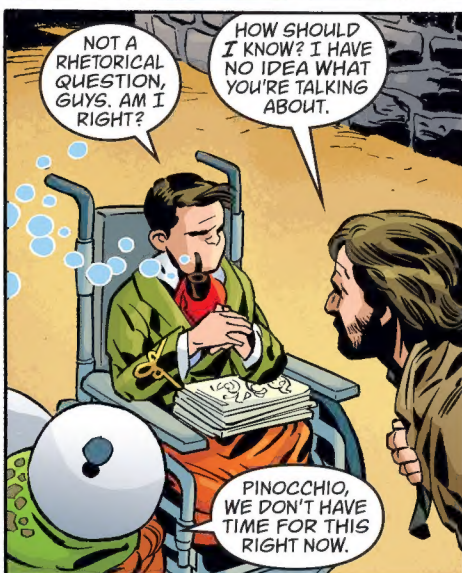
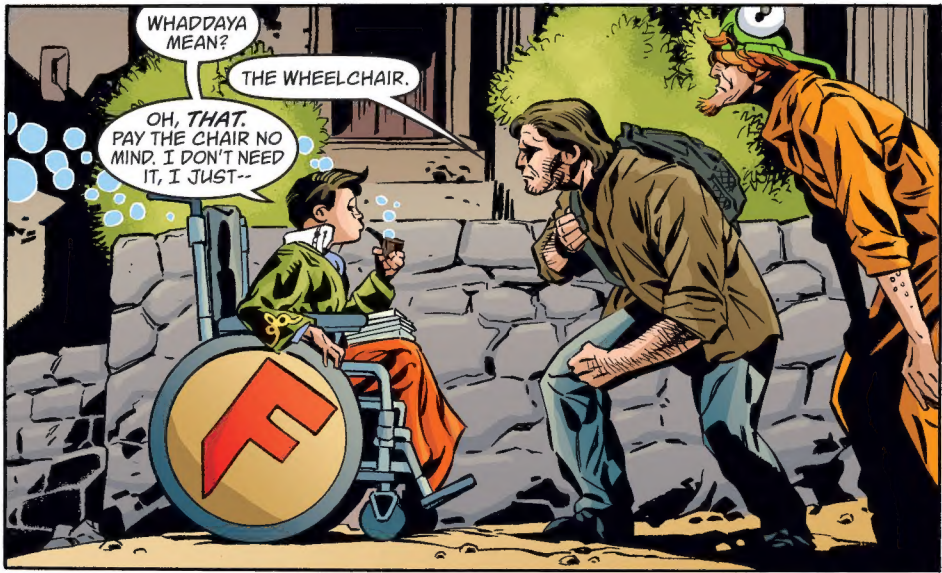


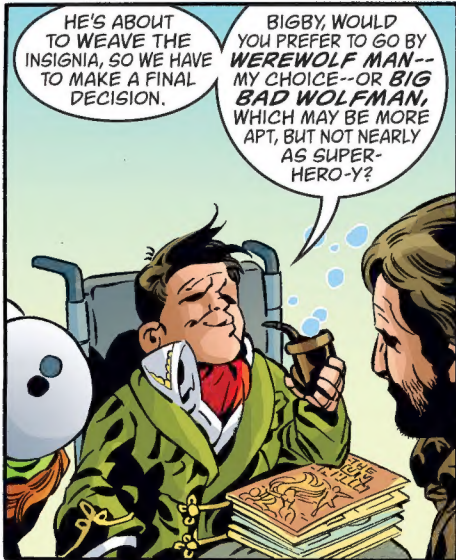
YOU CAN'T HOG BIGBY ALL TO YOURSELF LIKE THAT, FLY!

I'VE BEEN WAITING TO SEE HIM FOR DAYS AND DAYS AND HOURS AND HOURS AND MINUTES AND MINUTES!

PINOCCHIO? WHAT HAPPENED?







HE'S ABOUT TO WEAVE THE INSIGNIA, SO WE HAVE TO MAKE A FINAL DECISION.

BIGBY, WOULD YOU PREFER TO GO BY **WEREWOLF MAN**-- MY CHOICE-- OR **BIG BAD WOLFMAN**, WHICH MAY BE MORE APT, BUT NOT NEARLY AS SUPER-HERO-Y?



Y'KNOW--IN THE **TRADITIONAL** SENSE. GOLD AND SILVER AGE, AS OPPOSED TO THE GRIM AND GRITTY ANTIHERO ERA.

I STILL HAVE NO IDEA WHAT--

**PINOCCHIO, STOP IT!**



SERIOUSLY, YOU HAVE TO STOP. THIS IS GRAVE, DANGEROUS BUSINESS.

BIGBY JUST GOT HERE AND HE HASN'T EVEN **SEEN** THE BORDER YET.



DO YOU WANT TO COME WITH US?

**NO!**



NOT ONLY NO, BUT **HELL** NO!

**IN NO WAY--NO!**

ELSEWHERE...

I HAVE TO CONFESS, MISTRAL, I'M CONFOUNDED.

A RACE?

YOU'RE ON!

BUT WHAT DO WE GET IF ONE OF US WINS?

THIS ZEPHYR, THE CHILD NAMED GHOST, IS A MONSTER-- A MISTAKE OF NATURE.

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DESTROYED OUT OF HAND.

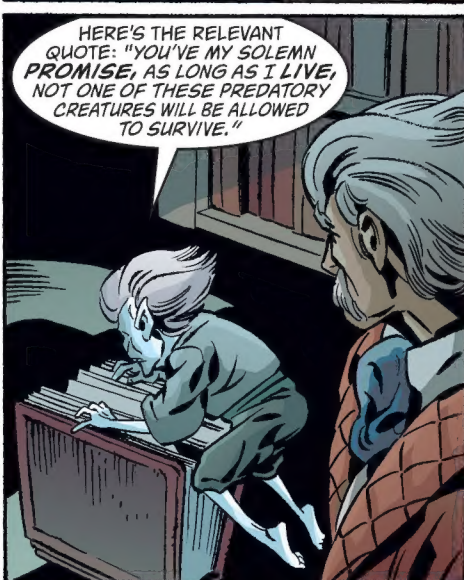
BUT IT'S MY SON'S CHILD. I CAN ONLY CONCLUDE HE MUST LOVE THE DEFORMED THING, OTHERWISE WHY NURTURE IT? WHY KEEP IT HIDDEN FROM ME?

KNOWING YOU'D KILL IT, IF YOU KNEW.

AT THE SAME TIME, MY SON'S MADE IT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR HE BEARS NO LOVE FOR ME.

SO IT'S UNLIKELY HE'LL THINK ANY LESS OF YOU ONCE YOU DO EXTINGUISH THE MONSTER.





AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME...

IT'S AWFUL GAUDY.

BUT I HAVE TO CONFESS, I SORT OF LIKE IT.

HOW CAN YOU NOT? IT'S WICKED COOL! A BIT RETRO, BUT WE'RE A TRADITIONAL PEOPLE.

BUT IS IT FUNCTIONAL? I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY SUCH COSTUMES ARE NECESSARY.

WELL, LOOK AT IT THIS WAY. YOU WANT EVERY ADVANTAGE POSSIBLE, RIGHT? AND YOU SAY THAT A LOT OF MAGIC IS BASED ON CONFIDENCE, RIGHT?

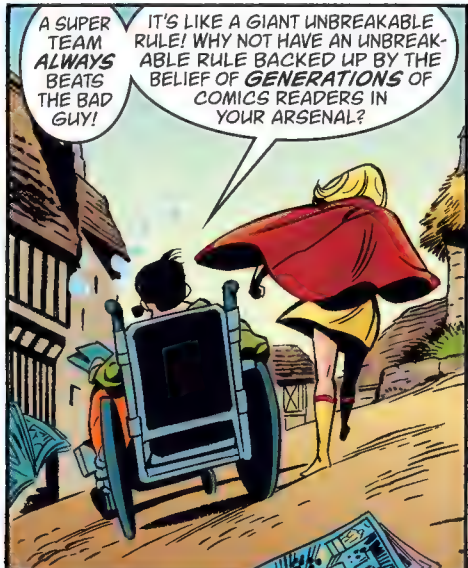
BELIEF MAGIC. YES, STRONG CONVICTION *DOES* CREATE POWER, BUT NOT AS MUCH AS OTHER DISCIPLINES.

SO WHAT? IF IT ONLY ADDS A LITTLE TO THE TOTAL, THAT'S SOME YOU WOULDN'T HAVE HAD OTHERWISE, RIGHT? EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS.

TRUE, BUT--

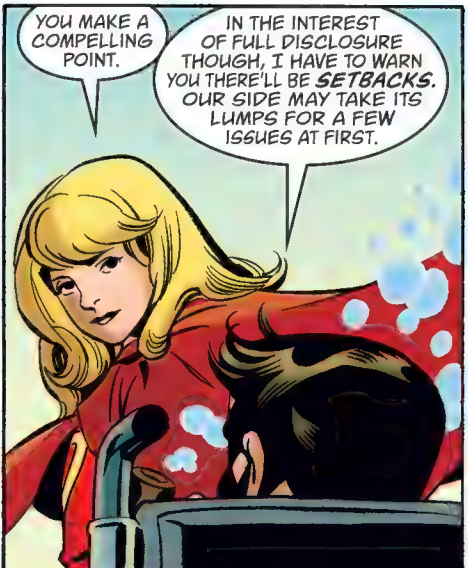
LOOK, BABE. I'M NOT AN EXPERT ON MUCH, BUT I KNOW MY FUNNYBOOKS. YOU'RE ALREADY PUTTING TOGETHER THE ULTIMATE STRIKE TEAM TO GO AFTER MISTER DARK.

WHY NOT MAKE IT A SUPER TEAM?



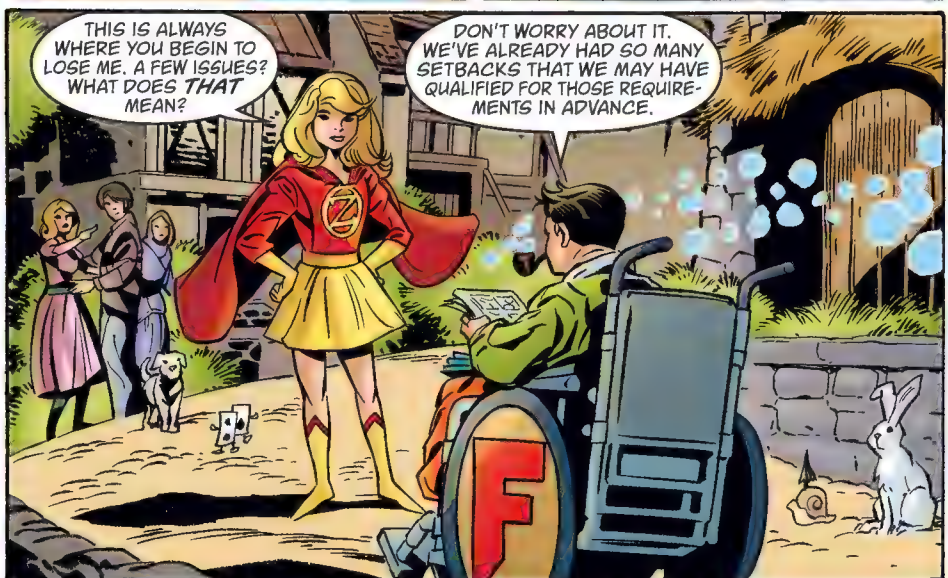
A SUPER TEAM ALWAYS BEATS THE BAD GUY!

IT'S LIKE A GIANT UNBREAKABLE RULE! WHY NOT HAVE AN UNBREAKABLE RULE BACKED UP BY THE BELIEF OF GENERATIONS OF COMICS READERS IN YOUR ARSENAL?



YOU MAKE A COMPELLING POINT.

IN THE INTEREST OF FULL DISCLOSURE THOUGH, I HAVE TO WARN YOU THERE'LL BE SETBACKS. OUR SIDE MAY TAKE ITS LUMPS FOR A FEW ISSUES AT FIRST.



THIS IS ALWAYS WHERE YOU BEGIN TO LOSE ME. A FEW ISSUES? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. WE'VE ALREADY HAD SO MANY SETBACKS THAT WE MAY HAVE QUALIFIED FOR THOSE REQUIREMENTS IN ADVANCE.



SHORT VERSION IS THIS: TRUST ME. THIS WILL WORK.

FINE. YOU'VE CONVINCED ME.

BUT ONE THING, PINOCCHIO--



--CALL ME "BABE" AGAIN AND I'LL SHRINK YOUR ALREADY WEE DINGUS BEYOND ANY HOPE OF RECOVERY.

:YALP!:

MEANWHILE, IN THE CITY OF DARKLAND..

WAS THE STEAK NOT TO YOUR TASTE, MISS?



Gottfried's STEAK HOUSE

NO, IT WAS FINE, ANDRE. I JUST DIDN'T FINISH.

I GUESS IT TAKES LESS TO FILL ME UP THESE DAYS. ENOUGH IS AS GOOD AS A FEAST, AS THEY SAY.



BUT FOR TOMORROW, PLEASE TELL CHEF THAT I'D LIKE A LEANER TRIMMED CUT, WITH LESS MARBLING. TOO MUCH FAT IN THE MEAT PUTS TOO MUCH FAT ON THE HIPS.

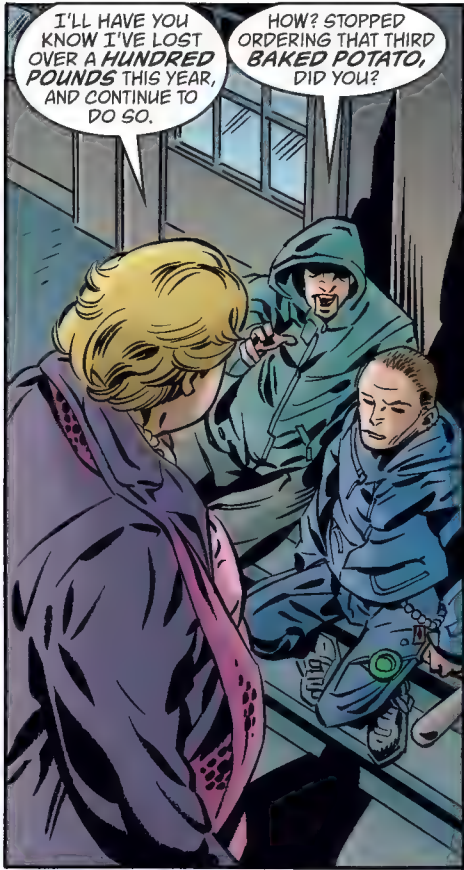
OF COURSE, MISS. ANYTHING AT ALL FOR OUR BEST CUSTOMER.



PORTRAIT OF AMERICA: AN OBESE WOMAN LEAVING A DEATH HOUSE, SMELLING OF MEAT AND BLOOD.

COME OVER HERE, LADY. PAY US A MURDER TAX. IT'S OUR WORLD TOO YOU'RE DESTROYING.





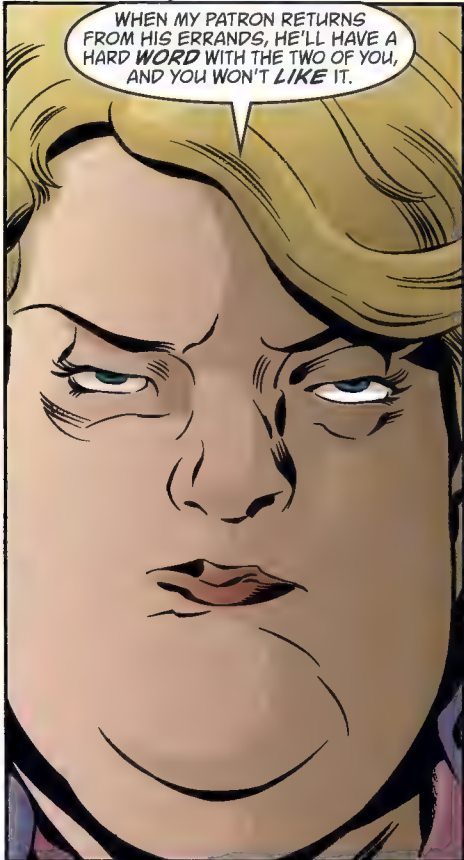
I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW I'VE LOST OVER A **HUNDRED POUNDS** THIS YEAR, AND CONTINUE TO DO SO.

HOW? STOPPED ORDERING THAT **THIRD BAKED POTATO**, DID YOU?



MUNDYS. TYPICALLY **ARROGANT** IN YOUR IGNORANCE AND WORTHLESSNESS.

I'VE MARKED YOU.



WHEN MY PATRON RETURNS FROM HIS ERRANDS, HE'LL HAVE A **HARD WORD** WITH THE TWO OF YOU, AND YOU WON'T **LIKE** IT.



NOT ONE **BIT**.



HAVEN.

NO, HONEY, IT WASN'T OUR FAULT. NO PART OF IT WAS OUR FAULT.

WE WEREN'T THERE.

WE'RE NOT THE ONES WHO THREW OURSELVES A STUPID PARTY WHILE MISTER DARK WAS BARELY CONTAINED IN AN OPEN COURT-YARD.

THEY DID.

THEY ACTED LIKE THE DONNER PARTY--WHICH IS UNFORTUNATELY APT--BECAUSE WE'RE ALL GOING TO GET EATEN FOR OUR FOLLY!

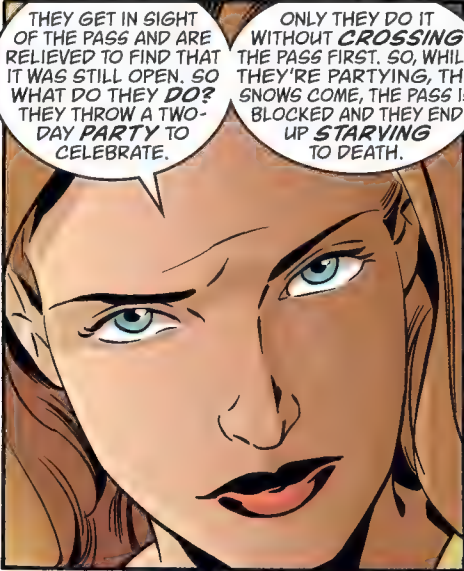
HUH? DONNER WHAT'SIS?

DON'T YOU REMEMBER? IT WAS BARELY A CENTURY AGO. IT WAS IN ALL THE PAPERS.

THE DONNER PARTY WAS HEADED FOR CALIFORNIA IN A WAGON TRAIN.

THERE WERE DELAYS, SO THEY WERE WORRIED ABOUT GETTING TRAPPED ON THE **WRONG** SIDE OF THE SIERRA NEVADAS BEFORE SNOW CLOSED THE PASS.

SURE, I REMEMBER THE INCIDENT. I JUST DON'T GET ITS REFERENCE TO US.



THEY GET IN SIGHT OF THE PASS AND ARE RELIEVED TO FIND THAT IT WAS STILL OPEN. SO WHAT DO THEY DO? THEY THROW A TWO-DAY PARTY TO CELEBRATE.

ONLY THEY DO IT WITHOUT **CROSSING** THE PASS FIRST. SO, WHILE THEY'RE PARTYING, THE SNOWS COME, THE PASS IS BLOCKED AND THEY END UP **STARVING** TO DEATH.



JUST LIKE OUR RIDICULOUS FABLETOWN LEADERSHIP DID, BEFORE PLACING MISTER DARK IN SOMETHING MORE SECURE THAN A HALF INCH OF GOLD PLATING.

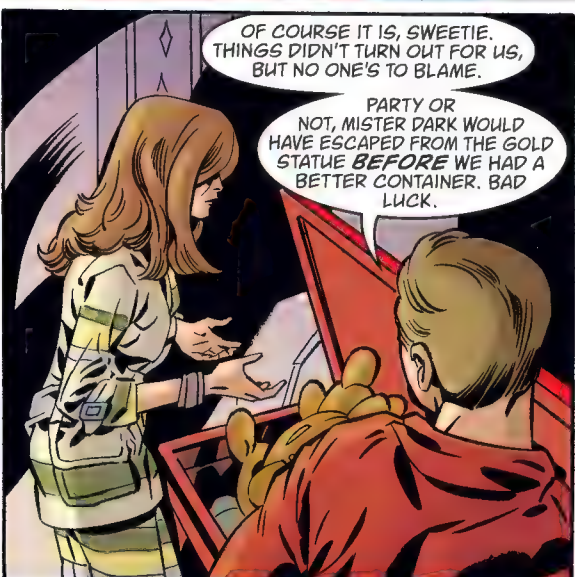
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PLAN TO **BOX** HIM?



IT WASN'T READY.


WHAT?  
I WAS HELPING DUNSTER HAPP WITH THE NEW BOX. IT WAS STILL A GOOD TWO OR THREE WEEKS FROM BEING READY.

THAT'S NOT THE POINT!



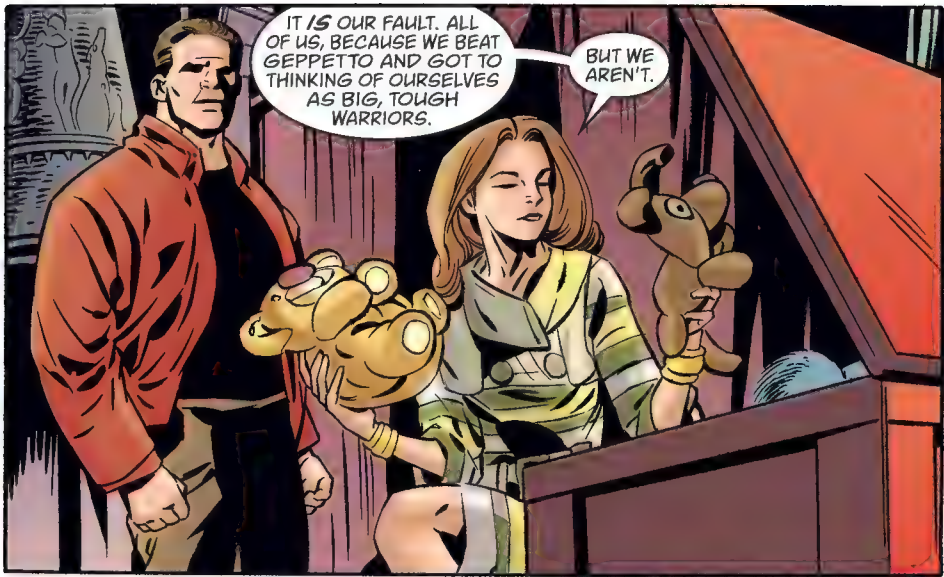
OF COURSE IT IS, SWEETIE. THINGS DIDN'T TURN OUT FOR US, BUT NO ONE'S TO BLAME.

PARTY OR NOT, MISTER DARK WOULD HAVE ESCAPED FROM THE GOLD STATUE **BEFORE** WE HAD A BETTER CONTAINER. BAD LUCK.



I KNOW YOU WANT TO HOLD SOMEONE RESPONSIBLE, BUT THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE **SCARED**. I AM, TOO.

WE'LL JUST HAVE TO THINK OF SOMETHING ELSE.



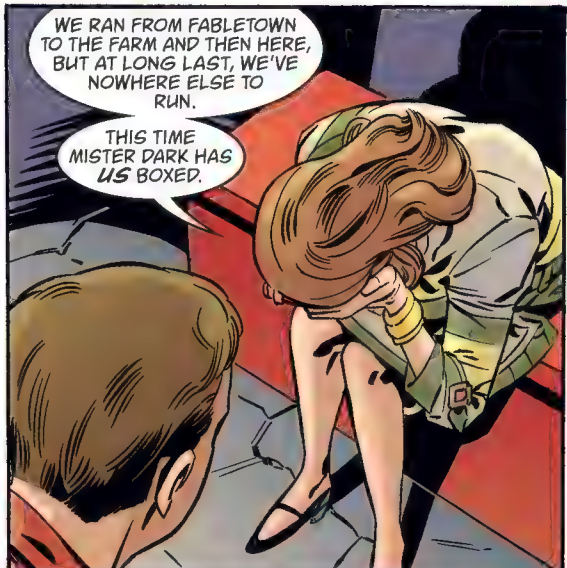
IT IS OUR FAULT. ALL OF US, BECAUSE WE BEAT GEPPETTO AND GOT TO THINKING OF OURSELVES AS BIG, TOUGH WARRIORS.

BUT WE AREN'T.



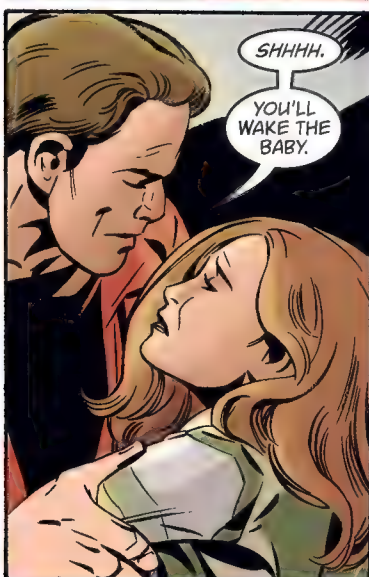
WE AREN'T EXPERTS AT WAR, OR BATTLE, WE'RE EXPERTS AT *RETREAT*. THAT'S HOW WE ALL ESCAPED THE EMPIRE CENTURIES AGO.

OUT OF MILLIONS, WE FEW SURVIVED BECAUSE WE *DIDN'T* STAND TO FIGHT. WE RAN AWAY AND FOUNDED FABLETOWN. *RUNNING* IS WHAT WE'RE GOOD AT.



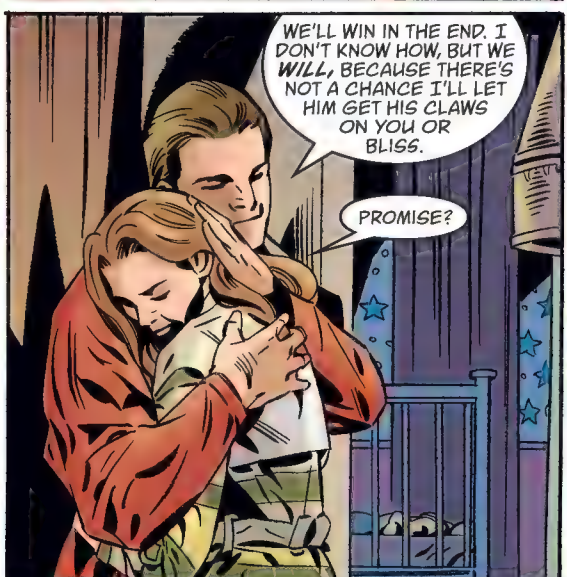
WE RAN FROM FABLETOWN TO THE FARM AND THEN HERE, BUT AT LONG LAST, WE'VE NOWHERE ELSE TO RUN.

THIS TIME MISTER DARK HAS *US* BOXED.



SHHHH.

YOU'LL WAKE THE BABY.



WE'LL WIN IN THE END. I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT WE *WILL*, BECAUSE THERE'S NOT A CHANCE I'LL LET HIM GET HIS CLAWS ON YOU OR BLISS.

PROMISE?



ELSEWHERE...

NOT MUCH FARTHER NOW.

WHERE'D THE SUNSHINE GO?

IT STAYS PRETTY DARK OUT BY THE BORDERS.

WHY?

BECAUSE OF HIM.

HE FIRST SHOWED UP ABOUT SEVEN WEEKS AGO.

NOW HE'S ALMOST ALWAYS HERE--SOMEWHERE ON THE BORDERLANDS.



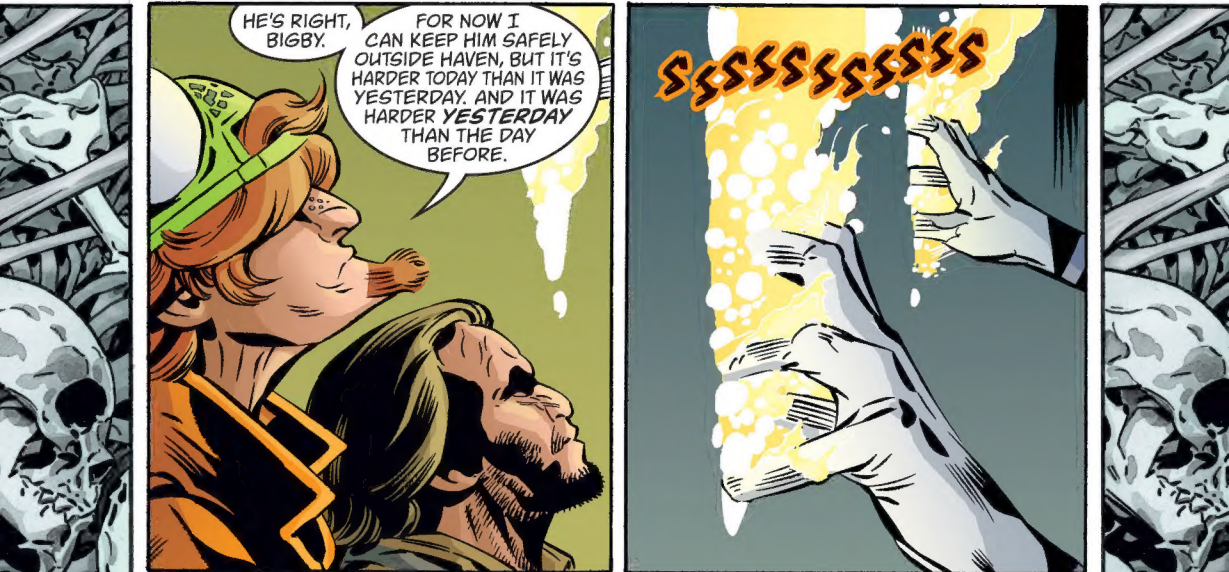
TRYING TO GET IN.

THERE YOU ARE, LITTLE FROG KING. ANOTHER VISIT SO SOON?

YOU CAN BARELY STAY AWAY FROM ME.

WHY NOT JUST LET ME IN? IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN SOONER OR LATER.

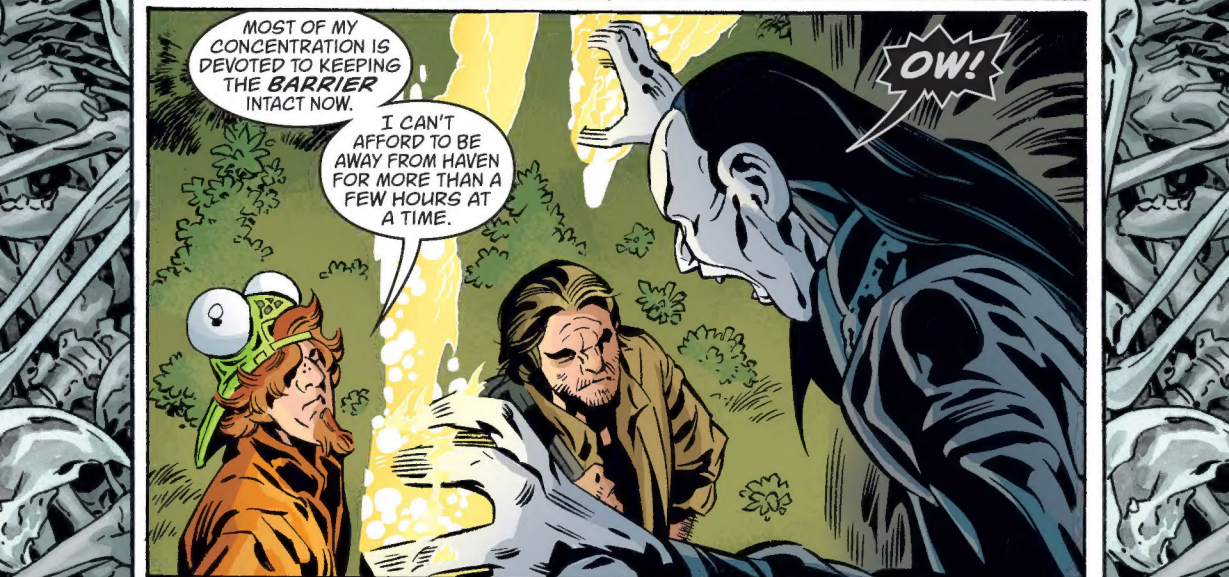
WITH EVERY PASSING MINUTE, I CAN FEEL YOUR POWER FADING, WHILE MINE GROWS.



HE'S RIGHT, BIGBY.

FOR NOW I CAN KEEP HIM SAFELY OUTSIDE HAVEN, BUT IT'S HARDER TODAY THAN IT WAS YESTERDAY, AND IT WAS HARDER YESTERDAY THAN THE DAY BEFORE.

S S S S S S S S S S S S S S S S



MOST OF MY CONCENTRATION IS DEVOTED TO KEEPING THE BARRIER INTACT NOW.

I CAN'T AFFORD TO BE AWAY FROM HAVEN FOR MORE THAN A FEW HOURS AT A TIME.

OW!



ENOUGH!

...FOR NOW.

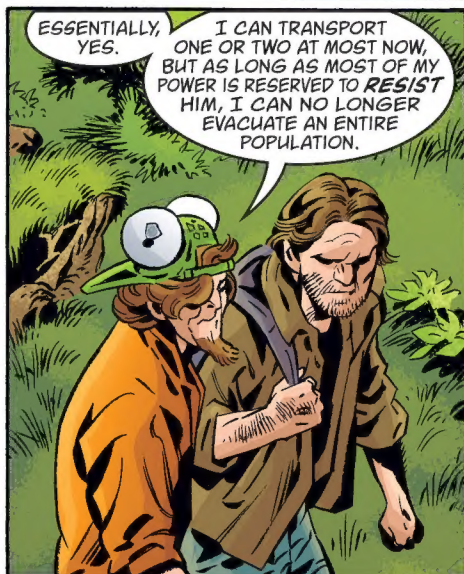
BUT I'LL TRY AGAIN IN A SHORT TIME, AND EVENTUALLY YOUR WALL WILL CRUMBLE!



SCAMPER AWAY, LITTLE KING, BUT SOON I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN ON MY TERMS.

I WANTED YOU TO SEE FOR YOURSELF WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST.

I THINK YOU'RE ABOUT TO TELL ME WE'RE TRAPPED.



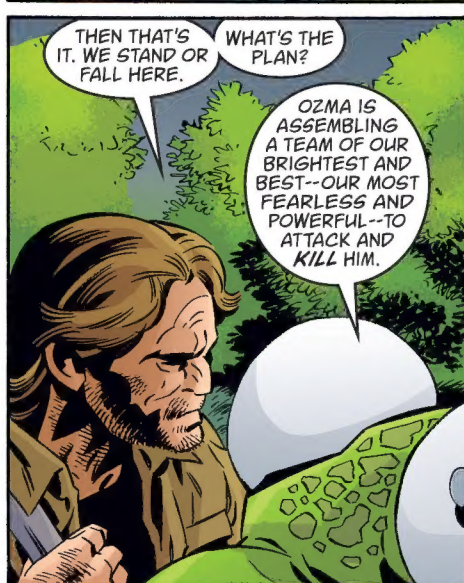
ESSENTIALLY, YES.

I CAN TRANSPORT ONE OR TWO AT MOST NOW, BUT AS LONG AS MOST OF MY POWER IS RESERVED TO RESIST HIM, I CAN NO LONGER EVACUATE AN ENTIRE POPULATION.



IF I TRY, HE'LL BE THROUGH IN AN INSTANT.

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, THIS IS WHERE WE'LL MAKE OUR LAST STAND AGAINST HIM.



THEN THAT'S IT. WE STAND OR FALL HERE.

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

OZMA IS ASSEMBLING A TEAM OF OUR BRIGHTEST AND BEST--OUR MOST FEARLESS AND POWERFUL--TO ATTACK AND KILL HIM.



FRAU TOTENKINDER PROVED WE CAN WEAR HIM DOWN, PROVIDED WE PICK JUST THE RIGHT ONES WHO WON'T FEED HIM POWER EVEN AS WE'RE TRYING TO DEGRADE IT.

AND YOU'VE MORE OR LESS BEEN DRAFTED.

**NEXT: CHOOSING THE TEAM!**

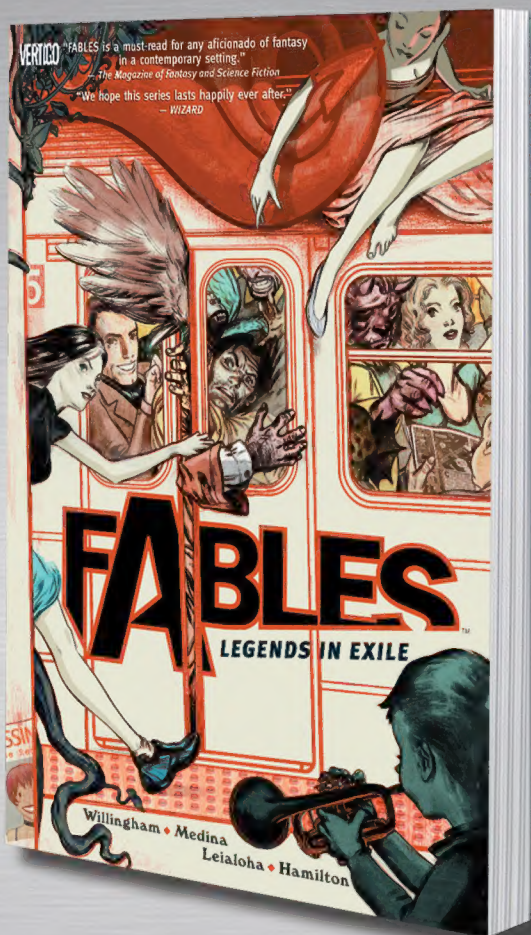
"FABLES is an excellent series in the tradition of SANDMAN, one that rewards careful attention and loyalty." – ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

# BILL WILLINGHAM

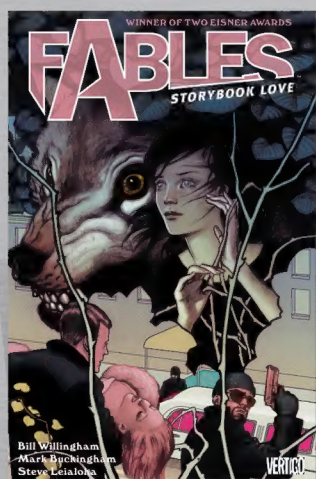
"[A] wonderfully twisted concept... features fairy tale characters banished to the noirish world of present-day New York."  
– THE WASHINGTON POST



- VOL. 1: LEGENDS IN EXILE
- VOL. 2: ANIMAL FARM
- VOL. 3: STORYBOOK LOVE
- VOL. 4: MARCH OF THE WOODEN SOLDIERS
- VOL. 5: THE MEAN SEASONS
- VOL. 6: HOMELANDS
- VOL. 7: ARABIAN NIGHTS (AND DAYS)
- VOL. 8: WOLVES
- VOL. 9: SONS OF EMPIRE
- VOL. 10: THE GOOD PRINCE
- VOL. 11: WAR AND PIECES
- VOL. 12: THE DARK AGES
- VOL. 13: THE GREAT FABLES CROSSOVER
- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



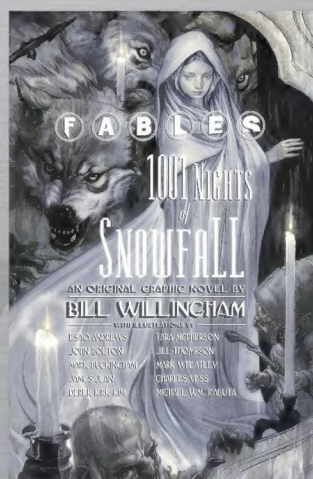
FABLES VOL. 3:  
STORYBOOK LOVE



FABLES VOL. 6:  
HOMELANDS



FABLES:  
1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



Use the **BUY IN PRINT** feature to find a comics shop near you.  
Check back here every week for **NEW DIGITAL RELEASES!**

Suggested for Mature Readers



NATHAN